

BEHIND THE MASK



A COLLECTION OF POEMS
BY JAMES W. BLAKE



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BEHIND THE MASK

A COLLECTION OF POEMS
BY JAMES W. BLAKE

COVER DESIGNED BY
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*Dedicated to those back there who
survived; especially Volney and
Ruth--my parents--who taught me
how to live on both sides of the
mask.*

Introduction

I met Jim Blake in the wake of his hurricane across Contra Costa College smoking towards a first black studies (students) union. He had put down his paint brush and the painter's union in San Francisco to crack some books and some heads with his enormous energy and humane action. You could tell by his smile and his enthusiasm that he'd survived mostly because he had the equipment to sing, and the fortification from his family and his line of tradition, the great heroic line of improvised skilled masters of the instruments of transcendence, and he spiritualized the WORD.

The word is power in the transformational image created by the vessel of the spirit, and Jim Blake has been in tune longer than he has consciously tried to belong—he has always been/he is a form of **being**. For his subject matter he has focused on that spiritual aspect of form, in human body, which lasts, and he glorifies in the long testamental process of the great musicians he esteems with his word(s), in love and homage. His resource is love, for his people, for achievement, for declaration of the powers to transcend. Such homage includes the self, the political, all the manifest world, for Jim Blake is a man of action, he creates by making effort, and the world moves a little in its cosmic way. He is also in touch and can deliver the manifestation of the high mode: that speaks to the balance of seen and unseen, potential and actuality, other-worldliness and the world. He's a vessel of the high mode, in the high mode !

Michael S. Harper
Professor and Director of Writing Program
Brown University

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* = Poems in Michael Harper's Anthology,
Black Veils

“...the slave must know no higher law than his master's will. The whole relationship must not only demonstrate to his mind its necessity, but its absolute rightfulness. If there be one crevice through which a single drop can fall, it will certainly rust off the slave's chain.”

Frederick Douglass: 1892

INARTICULATE

Jams is what

poems by

black poets is . . .

like

en

en

Jazz

blues

spirituals.

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THE MASK

In the old days,
it was broken tools,
burned fields, and stupidity,
"Swing Low Sweet Chariot"
the big grin , and laziness.

Today . . .

JEAN

Her dark eyes and full lips
were once mine,
but a house nigger told on me,
and I had
to flee.

Charlie has her for good now,
in *Napa*.

AS I FACE EACH MORNING'S DAWN
(to one it was a tale of nothing)

A nocturnal mocker crys for the dawn,
and i scab covered in awe, face the east,
lines grown thin between ulcers fade,
the desire to remove these husks ennui,
inside the razored sand destroys,
my pen to pearl the agent, crys an ode,
of life slowly ebbing out,
fecund in a vision of pain,
sun bakes the shell, insects wane, the juice sealed,
lungs cleared a few hours, before the grasping night,
sweet drugs a moment fence bloodthirsty shrieks:
the death wish to canonize human flesh,
the dash to the rocks below, mental spectres fled--
beaters drive the lion to climax .
the cat pinned to the ground, sand enveloped in white orbs
is *Xipe-Totec* as hot tears flow down flaking cheeks.

So intense the agony
of waiting for one's love
(usually a role so wrongfully cast
on women by the ignorance of males).
Long the hours as
pitfalls increase
until they become faults
stripped from an ego
that now crys out
from limitation.

I could not understand
 until I read a poem
 by a young sister.
 It was a lament
 to hard work,
 a petition against
 the hardship of
 blackness/racism.
 She was but a bud,
 already tired and sad;
 so isolated into
 herself
 the petals became
 buttresses for
 her
 cathedral of
 misery.
 Her teardrops magnified
 a vision of you:

You were a desert flower,
 ef'en over famine.
 Ass to ass with the insects.
STYLING!
 Your odorous limbs exposed,
Gaming.

PIMP OR DIE! (*your cry*) PIMP

And death it was
 as you lured
 those desirous of
 your nectar
 into vital folds
 of your existence.

(stanza break)

The flesh you bartered
was a ticket to
THE GRAND ARENA
where a voodoo doll
of your likeness
was the main event,
and the box seats
were reserved for the
program designers
of esteemed lineages.

PIMP OR DIE!

*They forgot to tell you that the first Black Studies
Program was in HOMER'S Greece!*

PIMP OR DIE!

A mammy's milk turned to poison/pink mouths playtex nursed.

PIMP OR DIE!

Old black hands amputated for diamonds.

PIMP OR DIE!

*The desert
has
claimed*

Our footprints yield to your grave of shifting sand.

SOUTH PARK: SAN FRANCISCO

Obfuscated by the grandeur
of marble spears,
a pocket of decaying humanity
resists the masticating molars
of the Golden Gateway.
The whirl of production
surrounding idle shadows
of phased out slaves
sings the gleaming white
of America's body electric.

Hidden from the western showcase
of the *49 mile drive*
the rot etches away
at the enamelized coldness
of bigoted hate.

A playground of bleached
telephone poles and eccentric concrete objects
are useless tooth picks
despite the philanthropic vogue;
the rot is centuries old,
an extraordinary culture
that shields an extraordinary culture
too strong for the Nietzsche man.

Make it funky!
Make it funky!
Make it funky!
Make it funky!
Make it funky!

for Pearl Amos

HAIME

I t'was a good nigger
made 'um laugh
Got old--*uncle*
retired:
Where they hiring
Jones ! !

MR. BOOKER T.

Were you the Brer Rabbit
of African conjuring?
Did you take Stowe's
vision and turn it
into her husband's foe?
Did that scheme
divide our family
or was DuBois just
the turn man
and Garvey a substitute?
Is it true you taught
Chilembwe how to build
an icon for freedom
out of mud?
Some said it was
because of the white blood.
Did you really wink
approval with Mendel's laws
tucked under arm?
What is this I hear
of your creations--
OUT OF MYTH,
OUT OF INSANITY, OUT OF ILLUSION?
Mr. Booker T. :
were you the green moss
on the trees
leading slaves to Jordan?
were the interpretations of
you purposely distorted;
like our music, literature.
US?

(stanza break)

Who carved your mask?
Was it a synthesis of the
African continuum?
Did it fit so tight
brothers questioned/diatribed?

Mr. Booker T. were you an UNCLE TOM?

For James L. Talps

SPIRIT GOT ME

I had a boss woman
with wide hips,
nice legs,
and she really knew how to groove.

But one day Jesus fucked her,
she's his now.

REVERSE ROUNDHEADS

*The sisters always tell us the beauty of our curls.
Ah! Great the feeling when an African feels African!*

We no longer caress
a Max Factor Goddess.
We now luxuriate in the
scented twirls of curls,
sniff the velvet armpits
of vulgarity.

The Faggot-E creations
of demagogues we reject
as

we
feel
the
weight
of
our
penises
without
shame,

escaping the gloom of Mme. Walker's comb and cream,
responding to the vapor of every flower in our midnight
garden, each varied in color, texture--broad like our
love and experience.

We have parried the Puritan zeal to shroud our beauty,
and found sweet tubers; a liberation of an exotic
from the mundane soil.

Our improvisation is unique,
like our cellular composition,
a jazz tune defiled by ignorant ears.

WHAT IT IS

Is it
a colored
heaven on earth?
Where black fingers ply
golden strands of hair.
Where smacks and sniffs
disguise the pain,
and pointed leaves
dilute the hate.
Where a cowboy
runs amuck
cause his daughter
loves to fuck.
Where a smorgasbord
of sex parts
upon markees display.
Where negro folks
grin swing and sway
to soul music aired
on KDIA.
Where the links
of chains are
padded with Cads;
removed from the limbs
placed on the mind.

NO PRICE

My
hair
is
straight.
Complexion just right.
Got the world on a strand,
but I can't do
like my father
ten generations ago. (on my mother's side)
Damn money!
Seems savagery is right
At least its got
to be my life.

for Dennis

SCAT

Satchmo's feel/ Lil' Arthur's smile/ Ella's range

Ah do be do

ah do be do

ah do be do

ah do be do

ah weeeeeeeee!

Red beans and rice
feeding bellowed black cheeks,
blowing the escape songs
into a new mode,
breaking away,
riffing, souling Yeah!
POPS done left the bayou
Eb be do ah

Whop a do. yeah!

A Roman brass strobed to
the beat of a tambourine.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah scoo be do !

THE RED SUMMER,

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK,

GREAT WHITE HOPE,

slaves on Broadway stealing lights,
doing their thing, warming Nordic limbs.
"Shuffle Along"

Strutting wid som bar be Q,
the Savannah done gone north *MODULATE !*

What it is? TOTAL COLOR

POPS getting called Tom

when he's kicking ass

with what he got *Yeah!*

Yaaah!

Ah do be do

ah do be do

ah do be do

ah weeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

FRICATIVE FREEDOM: SCAT

Sa lip en clew
pla tam a shoo
into the pluge
of nipe squzz
& zoom
en tip pro lap
em lip ah phew.
Sa-lick wid Bop
slurge purge
nurge of furge
SHAZAM!
uh sippi salenk nippie
cu-lass shittee
splam damn
trig nig.

For:

Clark Terry
Babs Gongalves
Jon Hendricks
Ella Fitzgerald
Sarah Vaughn
and other disciples of
the king of scat--Satchmo

CRISS CROSS

i went to a city
cradled in the Rockies
where the air was
rarified and crisp.
The journey was
a must; a trip to
a dead branch
of the family tree:
an uncle totally
isolated into himself.

They say he had
been a warrior
for freedom
(*and he still a slave*),
that his reward
was a government room,
void of color
except his
and a red white and blue
rag.

They say two
eagles
quarreled over
Africa and had
him transported
over an ocean
that was a sepulcher
for his past,
and devoured his cerebrum.

(stanza break)

i sat before this uncle,
a shell of a limb
gouged by white termites.
The beads of crystalline
sap mirrored
my role as i fought
the bitter taste,
controlled the ache
in my groin.

i have discovered
that my ambivalence is
a chameleon to
the eagles' eyes,
a cranial armor.

WATTS: A METAPHOR FOR AMERICA

It is here--during a season of
dust, fear, and poverty--Bontemps
exhumed the spirit of Gabriel.
A season of war brought the bald
eagle who caged the Japanese, and
devoured the fields. The beating
of his wings formed a basin where
Langston Hughes' rivers flowed
into a lake. Water gave strength
to an outpost of indigenous
diehards. Mexico and Harlem rallied
in Zoot suits and drove the mutant
skyward. Its giant wings absorbed
the sun; the umbra of its flight
stagnated the expanding lake.
Throes of hate sparked the
fossilized pool into flame,
blinding light swallowed darkness,
heat forced the bird higher in the sky--space bound.
The earth cracked, John Brown's
prophecy roared like thunder.
Millions of black souls walked
out of the oceans, joined in ritual,
their dancing kin. Africa regained
her children, the aged wound began
to heal. Eagle worshippers trod on
hot cinders, gazed at the speck in
the sky, and cursed the niggers.

For Richard Lishie

LOOTERS

Six men shot
in the back,
down in
the old peach state
They wouldn't wait for Santa;
so they died.

BATES

Xhosa witch doctor
four centuries removed,
scapel in hand,
agent against
Sir Thomas More's genocide plan.

Copesetic!

Underground railroad
still running strong.

“My greatest lack has been, I believe, that I don’t have the kind of academic education I wish I had been able to get--to have been a lawyer, perhaps . . . Because I don’t begin to be academically equipped for so many of the interests I have.”

Malcolm X: 1965

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Superfluous Lockean rhetoric
mellifluent Washingtonian platitudes
enigmatic Jeffersonian proposals

all

useless as a love chancre
to a simple people
who have not learned the politics
of genocide

TRYING TO MAKE MONEY NOW

A smile is necessary
its very hard to make me angry
Money Baby Money
Mark III is my goal
Satin and Reno
my pleasure

DAMN BLACK POWER

Money honey tea lump

a trading of parts
for a special glass
spirits broken into proofs
a mouth of gold
no longer in vogue
a forced ego to match
Montage Of A Dream Deferred
"Who set you flowing?"
pelican woman.

INCOME TAX SACK-A-WHOA

To contribute to
a little monster
in growth; tacitly
financing the poison
fed to her mind;
the price of busses
melted into broadswords,
and human blood jello'd
for sentry dogs.
Turnkeys are
polished pseudo-parvenus
whose only freedom
is a metaphor
of wing-tipped shoes;
cage, a concept
of plutocratic maintenance;
against the surge
of peasants--ALL.
EGO forged by
an opulent son, a
print dress of this
deceptive child,
a Dionaea Muscipula
cultured to taste
for men, lured into
normlessness,
delusions,
suffocation,
termination.

MAN EATERS

Stalking around
dependent
defiant
full of illusions
three generations of
forced whores
continue to flounce
and destroy
the male seeds on
the tree
A slavemaster's
I
u
s
t
brought
terror
turned soul to stone
vaginas to mortars
extended the myth of the bitch
and hid the fertility dolls
for Zetta

—

(a rap from an oppressor's frankenstein)

look'a here mark!
i'm bonified and qualified
i mean
i'm what's happening dig!
like i'm the dealer dig!
yeaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!
ya poot butt motherfucker
ya jiving!
jiving an talking that shit
trying to tell me where its at
shhhiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiit!
do you know *who* i am
i'm taking care of business baby!
like my tongue can't begin
to tell what my eyes done dug
like the scene is simple jack
PIMPORDIE ! dig it!
like ya either on top gaming
or gitting gamed on
all that interlecual jive ain't nothing
food for the fools dig it!
like you gotta git down
like the streets is where its at
PIMP OR DIE !
if you want to git some fat on your head
shit! i got 27 phds that'll
make a ass out them educated fools
that school scene ain't nothing
but a trick bag

(stanza break)

all'a dude needs is grand theft dough
a *hog* an a high stepping mud kicking *bitch*
(the mark's delight oh yea!
it'll sell when beef steak cain't)
check! ya run around with your fist in the air
poor as a he-haint bad moufing Charlie
with your woolly head self
talking that brother shit
Franklins is my main man
self is whats happening
damn that nigger shit
i'm going for me baby!
an i'll be here to see
all you jive motherfuckas
become a meal for the greedy worms
ya in bad shape
trying to build a empire with a nickle an a nail
you sorry bastard
it don't go that way
the strong takes the weak gives
it ain't Charlie's fault
cause he ain't scared to rip off
what he wants
i mean!
see them dope heads
all they want is smack/reds/jam
an if i don't bring it to 'um
somebody will
check my ride 16 grand jack!
an i stay clean.

(stanza break)

life is mellow chump!
if you know what side
of the street to hustle on

me an Charlie got a thang going!

GAMBLERS

a portrait of wooden forms and concrete

faces

sweat

eyes

ALL RIGHT GENTLEMEN ANTE UP !!

tension

hope

frustrations

CUT'EM!

profanity

ambivalence

prayer

DEAL'EM!!

lost?

searching?

GET LOOSE!!

urge?

habit?

oppression?

FALL'EM GENTLEMAN . . . LET'S GAMBLE!!

WINNER HERE!

GUSBONESWHIPLLOT

You ingeniously fashion
a vicks dropper
into a spike.
For the thousandth time,
you cook your future
in a spoon,
squeeze it into
Blood's Blood,
and wait.
Wrinkles in
your forehead smooth,
jaws loosen, mucus in
your nostrils thickens.
Senses fused
into a single sense
speed outward--space bound,
speeding faster and faster
until the velocity
becomes an orgasmic thrill,
a continuous come.
Breaking the reality barrier
you coast. . . float. . . coasting
on the currents of apathy.
A rat just bit your baby!
You nod, you coast . . .
you feel sooooooooooooooooooooo
oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo.
A cop done shot ya daddy!
You nod and coast
to that opiated rhythm.
They're tearing down ya mama's house!
A kraal is readied for yo folks!

(stanza break)

You nod
and
coast
and
nod
and
coast
and
.
.
.
and
float. .
.
.
and
.

PREMONITION

You smell the bones
and the once poisonous
weeds cooking on the stove.

This daily miracle
of survival you watch
in innocence.

A tired black hunter,
your father, caressingly
fondles the fuzzy head
of his pride--you.

A conversation bubbles
like the water in the pots:
"Had to mock four fights today
'fore the paddies throwed the bones,
dey teased us wid the liver en
chitlins, rolling em in
the sawdust en dirt."

"I know, I hates that packinghouse,
I hates this town. I hates this land.
I hates the way that they dogs you."

You go outside to play soldier
looking for rats--your enemy.

Your battle is a real one,
but you won't know it,
till you're grown.

ALHAMBRA

He was separated from
the sweet nectar of
his mother's teats.

Hurled through ilks
and ilks of institutions
that hunger for exotic
flesh.

He is momentarily secure
in his woman's arms,
but he cannot remain there.

The world is his calling,
and knowledge his mistress.

She is hidden under the
myopia of academicians.

Wary of the procurers and
dogmatists he seeks her;
walking towards the sterile
buildings, passing hairy
balled nymphs playing frisby
on the lawns.

for John Maravilla

PROFESSOR DU B

He moved from
the caves of fear
into the reality
of IS,
a sanguinary journey
of tears, isolation.
Whereas light blinded
those who fled
the dark, using the
bodies of brothers
for stairs,
he survived that folly;
a harbinger and donor-phile
bearing pain
too strong for many,
birth pain of, why?
A task given to
the strongest animal.
The vastness of the
cosmos made him
so, a force of life
jazz musicians/poets generate,
ritual chants of
free.doom from womb,
a religion stretched
from the Leaky man,
thru secular madness
into exodus.

ANGELA

She should be an Eastern star
where Ananse can hang his web
not a Dahomean amazon
twice led for masculine greed.
She should liken herself
to the Fanti's NYIAKRONPON
not to the benefit of slavers
neutralizing a brother's act,
of agony and love.

Never should Helen gloat in her Troy
while condescending Adwa.

"And thus again in 1924 as in 1899 I seem to see the problem of the 20th century as the Problem of the Color Line."

W. E. Burghardt DuBois

BLOOD'S BLOOD

STRONG

o

n

e

d

r

o

p

a new scene.

for Claudius J. Smith

JIGABOO MODALITY

Hey there!

Swing this way.

Dig the set!

Miles, Monk, and Diz

are continuing that *Bird* flight

from Gringo junction . . .

a boom boom boom a boom boom boom a boom . . .

a *Cannonballing Trane*

with all that *NIGGERHOOD*

setting the mode

white sycophants

attempt

to

possess--

A *Roach* in the white house.

MISSISSIPPI BLACK CHILD

An only freedom, frustrations,
and fear, fused into a zygote
of tragedy; grown into a frail
delicate body, like the life-
less dolls from China. Dolls
that have more movement than
the soft brown listless eyes of
that moment. Eyes mounted in a
shallow face, exaggerated by
kinky hair pulled straight in
little plaits of tension, a
canopy for a waning brain that
only records the monotony of
poverty, while keyed to the
conservation of energy. Mys-
teriously living to the day her
bar-be-cued flesh will sate the
appetites of energetic people.

LULLABYE OF A BLUES SINGER
(an ebony tableau at James' Resturant)

Blues sof'en young eyes
that sees the sorry sorry people
locked outside the playground of love.

Daddy's gone !
Oh! Daddy's gone.

God bless the child
that learns the taste of blood, so young.

Oh, where is daddy gone?

To carry an enemy seed and love the sprout,
is a part of the cosmic law of birth,
a music that flows from female bodies,
times times time times time times time;
the part of every man denied--immortality.

Her song:
the blue of sky, starlight, the pain of birth,
the agony of male arrogance/death.

Daddy's gone !
Oh, dady's gone . . . gone !

for Almarine James

BIRD

*A molting bird
shining white like
the velvet which contrasts
the ebony stillness of cold lips.
Lips burned from all the pain
that poured from a gentle heart.*

A HIPE! A LOUSY HIPE! RIPPED!

*So far from
the gentle grasses
of Paseo Park,
where:
the pointed leaves dulled the hate
for a puff, and
snow became other
than those delicate February flakes.
Nursing a tube of metal
you pleaded to be loved*

CAN'T THEY HEAR ME!

*you cried
in such complex beauty,
soaring like a ring of smoke
passed by opium lips. . . SEPARATED & TIED . . .
gambling the seconds, suspended between time zones.*

Many who listened didn't know
of a black woman hurt by
her departed beat; filling that gap
with breasts of maternal love
coupled with biceps of toil,
washing down the blood of exotic dreams,
lips pursed in anger.

(stanza break)

*Driving through time belts
you meet one who tries to heal
that baptism of inner burn,
but your range is infinite, appetite voracious,
too strong for the zest that left in a cough*

Someone has heard the vibes
of your tenderness:

*She is white like the velvet
that heard the last murmur of that chirp.*

That chirp turned her soul black.

*Some thought it unfortunate
that genius should reside in a crow,
that black could not absorb.*

She thought that those who believed so
were ignorant of black,
and dove from the shores of hate
into a pool of misery and love.

*Gone are you in one dimension,
alive and vibrant in one;
soaring on the currents
of a black spirit that lives, dies to live,
and absorbs all;
a stone on the power triangle of survival
a baton for the hands of the future.*

for Janet

A GLANCE OUT THE WINDOW:

East Palo Alto, California/Saturday evening May 27, 1972/
engrossed playing music.

A reflection on the window pane:

Young black girls vibrating to *Shaft*,
boys who may never become husbands
are the *Yang* of this *Yin Yang*,
both torn from the drum beat of Africa,
a crime that cannot be rationalized/forgotten,
and Bach chorales will never sate their hunger.

OH SAY CAN YOU SEE

to turn a screw against
the turn
to let
lease
for peace:
a derminal touch
of shade
that does not cover
but rule
the young
who fight
because time
is the void
that blocks
the rays
that give
the glow
to plants
that punch a time clock
anchored to
a gut sack
that gluts the
world into shit!

KRAAL YALL

This is not Europe,
the star of David
is cursed
not banned here.
We are not Jews,
but 'ack horticulturists
who replaced
the murdered red hunters.

THIS IS AMERICA:

where ghettos are
sanctions and
nocturnal sanctums
for Jews who rob
in the kraal
by day;
where kraals are
barbed wire pens
for Africans not
quite domesticated--
the oldest section
of the city housing
standby laborers;
where wine and whisky
bottle collages
complement storefront windows
plastered with come-on signs.

CHALLENGED BY:

The Zion Methodist Church of God.

CHALLENGED BY:

The Sanhedrin of Rosenwald, Schwerner & Goodman.

CHALLENGED BY:

Free Huey posters, the star and the crescent,
and field niggers.

for Michael Krasny

PRIORITIES

My lighter brother
is blowing it
again
He walks around
professing to end
the contradictions
of Jeff
and George
But he honors them
with the ardor
of his
opulent training
Talks of poverty
when his veins
laden with cholestrol
still house
the blue blood
Talks of love
because I can now
stroke his sister's
thighs
WE both get loaded
on the opiate
of Revolutionary
Rhetoric
coasting together
high above
the reality
of
NIGGERHOOD

(stanza break)

I do it
because its the only time I can get his ear
unless
I propose to
let him
joog his darker opposite
Let him . . . Dig
(he still wants me to hustle some ass for him)
Then he tells
me Peace
is the
solution
but Martin Malcolm Edgar & Bobby H
rest in peace
don't niggers
full of smack
nod in peace
I tell him
the only peace
I can dig
is
P-I-E-C-E
a piece of
the action
or
a piece of the Man's ass
He tells me . . . WOW thats violence
VIOLENCE
LIKE I DON'T KNOW
WHAT IT IS

(stanza break)

For four centuries
I was the Prince of Peace
pleading to be loved
What did it
get

me
Tar feathers
a subsidized rifle
but
no

nourishment
So my lighter brother
don't go for
the peace bag

SLAVERY IN PEACE IS STILL HELL

So relate
to

Freedom . . . Freedom Now
"FREEDOM BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY"
and for once
let me establish
the priorities

MORIBUND

Sing the praises
of technology
non-melanous ones,
of how expertly
you raped mother,
and dug deep
into her innards,
leaving only a thin
shell of life.
You think your machines
a substitute for her breast--
that you have outgrown
her laws?

IMPRESSIVE TECHNOCRATS?

Euthenics/astroturf,
eugenics/controlled sex
a styrofoam vagina in living color
your supreme accomplishment--CYBERNETIC FOLK.

Mother is loving and timeless;
tolerating the Eries
enduring the pain,
she weaves a shroud
for her prodigal son's
return to dust.

SALESMANSHIP: WILLIE LOMAN DREAMS ON

a hobby shop
was once there,
pet peddlers across
the street,
neighborhood protective
group next door,
an ice cream shop
ex-whore run.

Shops, shops, shops!
for scratching white
hens of union cocks
and chicks with
budding combs.

THE NIGGERS ARE COMING ! !

Deep skilletts
and hot grease
the sales pitch,
bishop noses point away
selling short as
"chicken eaters"
buy/high.

Watermelons don't
become front lawn decor,
Cadillacs and Lincolns
adorn driveways.

TAXES RISE!

A million dollar
deal for the mongers
a million dollar
trick bag
for the muters
and commuters.

(stanza break)

Biff:

a mad motherfucker
that won't be heard!

MONK'S THEME

Indeterminate shews of gum
mosaiked on sidewalks
polished by the eddying
soles of slaves
are Toomer's vision of
"Seventh Street"
still alive despite
the parvenu illusion
of progress.
Faces of nations [tribes?]
splotched on the shields
of insecure mercenaries
evoke savagery
as saturday night
cracked open by the force of ritual
becomes a stage of identification
for those
chewed and discarded by greed.
Their ebb tide
is the paradox
which destroys the detail;
it is the attrition
of sole on soul
checked only by the joy
of birth to insipid generations
thick on cold concrete.
It is visible when
you look down--
take your head out
of the sky and
observe the communions
around bottled drugs
and efferent music.

(stanza break)

See faces change on
the phalanx front line
felled by the chewing,
unnoticed by replacements
too engaged to know.

for Thelonious

POISONED AIR DON'T CARE--MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DID

NORTHERLY

2 mothers were shopping
in their own way,
their children quite restless
began naturally to play.
One child was black
and the other white.
2 mothers embarrassed
reached for her own.
Both children startled;
cried, "Mommy, mommy why?"
2 mothers began
to tell their white lie.

NORTHEASTERLY

Boys driven to things
beyond love . . . to desire:
"Couple with that
white bitch," scorners retort,
fondling the good
hair child,
forcing pickaninnies
to breasts of
neglected blondes
escaped from
Puritan corsets.

(stanza break)

SOUTHERLY

History books omit
greed of fathers,
favoring daughters
prepared for the conqueror.
Girls rewarded
with a tale
of august vaginas,
who acknowledge
black beauty
as a mound of hair;
wrap it around a
black man's neck
swelling his bellow
to dysfunctional size.

WESTERLY

Jesters sing & shake asses,
knowing pain more intense
than all masturbations.
Poor . . . worn . . . tired,
they become an opulent's toy
quickly relishing tossed crumbs
between curtain calls &
support illusions of chance,
ill fated Kamikazes,
a paradox as profound as
the charge of the 10th &
11th U. S. Calvary.

(stanza break)

SOUTHEASTERLY

"Thank God i'm white,"
a national farce
sang by stringy haired serfs
mocking superfluous fleshed
Aunt Jemimas, while rooted
in a topsoil of ignorance/propaganda--
Keane eyes and empty stomachs
the contradiction.

EASTERLY

Under a political dome
a man lies in
the arms of legislation,
gentle tongues raise
his gavel to the summit
of copulation,
pounding strokes
a void as
only the handle is titillated--
squeezed by compromise.
Filibuster after filibuster
the senseless strokes;
the frigid partner yields not
until capital stimulates
an orgasm and stab wounds
from this man who
ejaculates while killing.

SOUTHWESTERLY

Hannibal's children
have crossed the psychological
desert, stripped the
alabaster veil from
Epaphus and Andromeda's
blackness,
the city of Angels
taste the wrath
of *Los Diablos*,
an octoroon is beaten
for white:

Paddie
Greaser
Nigger
Polac
Gook
Whop
Honkie
Spade
Peckerwood
Spick
In'jun
Them, always them . . . those people . . . them

(stanza break)

NORTHWESTERLY

The specialists in oil
push for the futility
of a seedling's thrust
through concrete.

Absolute Sovereignty
is the crutch that
blinds or distorts
recognition.

Energy in knotted
chests confined
surge to the psychic wall
and splatter in value
into concentric needs.

Tepees crushed
under logged trees
hold the remnants
of a spiritual people's
spirit

The streams are no longer muddy!

TIME VOID SPACE

The poison air
flows across all the fences
leaving a homogeneous stinking mass
that fertilizes the earth.

HOMO-SAPIENCIDE

Tidal waves of sadistic vanity
rip the flesh of helpless souls.
Barbed impotence pierce the throbbing
streams, drain sanguinary hopes into
a fermenting philosophy.
Their harps drive necrophagous beings over
the valleys and seas, rendering nature sterile
while heightening prurient demi-gods to erotic
orgies.
Jingoistic idiots wipe slimy semen from thighs
of overlords; proudly displaying bits of metal
as their children's bones crumble underfoot.
"Tis the way of life," they cry, duteously
wiping: using the uteri of their women for
towels.
A wounded planet, the stage for this ritual
of insanity, weeps polluted tears, and dies,
moaning through the universe:

"They kill Indians for horses."

"They kill niggers for white women."

"They kill gooks for God."

"They die . . . from idleness."

"I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

Martin Luther King Jr. : 1963

VISION

ONE I saw . . . *ONE!*

All things infinitely one,
pain and poverty powered
into creativity.

Ebony savages drunk in ritual,
their vitality feeding
starved earthlings,
jamming joy through
the cosmos . . .
JOY!

Man and nature wooing,
black fears fled,
white virginity seduced.
ALL copulating with ALL.
The universe that exploding
ORGASM . . .

ONE I saw . . . *ONE.*

POUGHKER

Life began for me
the day you came
into my arms.
The fragrance of
your youth
frightened and
awed me, but
you pushed
away the fears
with your boldness,
stroked my thick
lips with gentle
fingers, pushed
your hot body
into the groove of
mine, and
massaged the pain
away.
The music we make
ires many who
hate to see a gardenia
bloom in a field of slack,
but they do not
understand counterpoint,
or your need to
counterpoise their hate.
They are lost
like I was . . .
 before your love.

for Janet

GLANCES

A low flat land
caressed by the
king of winter.
A pane resisting
the advances of
Aretic thrusts,
as three brown
children flash
Buster Brown's
to the satisfaction
of a caged
barefoot mama.

A marbled train station,
a bold white hand
on a plump black bottom.

A husband defends.
Club swinging police
rally, as immobile
black faces watch
a part of them killed.

A yellow child
pregnant from starvation,
sacrificed to the God of
avarice. Interred in a
brown fetid river, amid
the rich feces of conquerors.

Horny executive suburbanites
flock to the tenderloin for
lunch. A menu of young black
flesh, marinated in venereal
disease and crime, waits.
The ticker tape runs on . . .

(stanza break)

Adolescent white girls
gang-banged in the
name of love, butchered
hymens a tribute to
King Hefner.

A wealth of mankind
stuffed in a garbage can.

MOTHER/AFRICA

I look into her face
and brown eyes
ringed in gray warm me.
Now, silvered hairs contrast
black, and the ambered flesh--
water, land, night.
Wave after wave,
stroke after stroke
the foamy beat,
omnipresent like
the African soul
behind the furrowed
face; centuries of
nights compressed in a mole.
Only yesteryear
the thundering beat
meant life to me
as I connected to
her total essences
knew not of the
fears my progenitors moaned--
tied in the
killer belly of
a slaver;
their lachrymose hours
an obbligato to the
blues song of the
one hundred fifty million gone;
the ebullient bubbles
of the serf
the metronome to this
"Strange Fruit"
dissolved in the brine.

(stanza break)

who says he is equal with God:
Man is today, tomorrow he is not,
I am is from eternity to eternity.

for Ruth Blake

In a sentimental mood indigo the solitude magnifies the woe of black, brown, and tan, and a sophisticated lady

individualism is group,
each piece an extension,
like a black V
against a blue sky.
You circle the globe
slander eroded by black hair
turned gray
is the throb
of a nation that cannot face the slave narrative,
or the whip lash boomeranged.
Sauna baths and French wines
compliment
not displace
sweet potato pies,
and 1955
the year of non-musical protest.

68

You knew the genius
of Africa, in Europe/America,
Beethoven and Haydn
bridged you and the motherland,
it was this black flame
that consumed the Goodman's and Dorsey's,
who sat on the GOLDEN STOOL because guns put them there!

Play on!
rhapsodic warrior,
council of elders,
scale the world!
There is no division between life & death
in Africa,
only a spiritual middle
that one enters
on troubled days.

SHOES

All 'a God's Chillin Got Shoes

We lib en da kraal
whars da same ole action
goes on day en day out.
We nebber gits a rests--nebber;
all-a-ways on de go,
wid de bitter sweat jes'a
sting'en de insides.
Only plAsha we gits is'a
gitten maSOCHd ter
da rhy'uum ob soft cloth.
We nebber gits da chance
ter layup en cool't--nebber.
If'n taint one pair ob feets
tits'a nother ter tin wid.
We's all-a-ways a'jus'en,
a'jus'en/jus'en/a'jus'en!
Dat glass en dem cracked sidewalks
keep ahs ass soe,
gotta maykit doe,
jest gotta.

RIDDLE

WHITE PEOPLE

f
o
r

WHITE PEOPLE

in

WHITE PEOPLE

MOST of the world

black

yellow

brown

red

mingling in oppression . . . as a rainbow

HORIZONS

A white mother sings a song
for her seed grown and planted
in a soil made worthless by bigotry,
love stimulated confrontation, rocked hypocrisy,
maternal duty gave vigor, faced the myth of race,
flowered a warm beautiful woman, reaching out,
to hold a stunted man, who for a moment,
could not receive.

To see a caricature was easier, than to feel
her heartbeat, realize a slave's vengeance
expunges wisdom, discover black is beautiful,
if human, that gregarious habitation
the greatest beauty, soul void of copyright.

Propaganda, which isolated, compressed,
and created the genetic snags
felt a protective mother's wrath,
a campaign against the toxic pool of hate,
greed, fear, and deceit was the ode,
a catenate for peace.

for Patricia Jeffre

HISTORY IS WITH THE OLD

Misty eyes from El Paso
recount the sun blending
black and brown bodies;
a dusty sunset rained on the
eyes of a senora too humble
to hold a passion:
*Decorated children buried
in expensive cheap metal,
a living experience exchanged
for a pay check of horror.
More flour, a roof, a car,
force acceptance,
the fruit of Juarez bulldozed,
a rotting seed the fruit feigned,
the tragedy of Quetzalcoatl the true image,
clothed by the perfidy of La Malinche,
her poison a prism diffusing black and brown
into ethnocentric cages.
Fingers of curly hair, and tan skin
metrically catalogued
to negate the source of the Latin beat,
foster the Pachuco--his bravado misinterpreted
as a scission from the Zoot suit truce.*
Wrinkled lids hold seasons of water and salt,
a rekindled loss of a husband,
opens the polished gates
spilling a universal treasure on the ground;
tears from an aged Mexican woaman
asking why black clouds have hidden the sunset,
back bowed in humility, because the bridge,
from yesteryear to today, has not been enough.

for Chole Martinez

DAVID

BLOND-HAIRED BLUE-EYED DEVIL!

A tiny grotesque sight you were
head full of water, spine exposed
absent of a mother's love--
A MONSTER!

But strong tender black hands
pulled you to a breast of survival
and love; and you, a twisted
young shoot defied death's scythe,
as the contagion of *NIGGERHOOD*
fortified your soul
straightened your body.

Now, I watch you run, play, smile
and I wonder . . .

BEHIND THE MASK



A COLLECTION OF POEMS
BY JAMES W. BLAKE



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